

ABUG



ABUG #46

APRIL 1987

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DIARY

The next few meetings will be held on:

6 May	
20 May	Annual General Meeting
3 June	
17 June	

Please note the THREE WEEK gap before our next meeting. Our new venue at the Sheffield Trades and Labour Club, Duke Street, seems to be conveniently placed, and has provided us with a reasonable size room at a reasonable price. The bar upstairs has fairly cheap ale, and they've even got draught Guinness! For those who haven't yet found us, it is just down the road from the Park Baths, on the opposite side. The room itself is down the stairs at the end of the right hand corridor.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Annual General Meeting time is almost here again, and with it your chance to play a more active part in your club. The present committee have been in office for two years now, and we feel that it's time that we had some fresh blood. It really takes very little extra time, and it's your chance to put some of your own ideas on how to run the club into practice.

The available jobs are (with present holders in brackets):

Chairman	(Frank Webster)
Secretary	(Mike Cattell)
Treasurer	(Mike Beetham)
Librarian	(Mike Robinson)
Newsletter Editors	(Dave Brown & Pete Frith)
Events Organiser	(No one!)

We are all very willing to give someone else a chance, so let's have some nominations!

ACORN IN THE BLACK

Acorn had a £1.4 million operating profit for 1986, compared with a £2.9 million loss for July - December 1985, and a £22.5 million loss for the previous year. After making a £200,000 loss for the first six months, sales increased by 38% during the second half, with a total turnover for the year of £47 million. The managing director, Brian Long, is reported to have said that Acorn are going to launch their RISC machine later this year (see below), and that it 'will achieve volume sales during 1987'.

Acorn apparently now has half the market for educational computers in the UK, and it is Europe's leading supplier. It reportedly spent £5 million on r & d last year.

Information from The Guardian & Computing

ACORN'S LATEST MICRO

The last Micro Live programme included a demonstration of a prototype of Acorn's new micro. Acorn have, for some time now, had a RISC-based system called ARM (Acorn RISC Machine), which they have been selling as an evaluation system, at around £4,500. ARM is a machine in a totally different performance league to earlier machines, running about 30 times faster than the Model B, 20 times faster than the Master and around 35 times faster than an IBM PC. When BASIC runs that fast, it can be used for a lot of applications which had to be written in machine code in the past for speed.

Acorn has gone further than just designing a RISC processor. That chip is just one of a set of four, which together make up the complete computer. It is this set of chips that really make ARM a stunning machine.

The other three chips are: i) a memory management chip, which looks after RAM, ROM and disc memory; ii) an input output chip; and iii) a graphics and sound chip.

The latter is most impressive. One screen mode gives a resolution of 640 by 512 with 256 colours per pixel, but the real beauty of this chip is that you can choose how much memory you want to use for a screen and how you are going to divide it between resolution and number of colours. You can go up to a resolution of 1000 by 1000. The sound system provides quality close to that of a compact disc.

However, it is not just a micro which can run BASIC very fast. The philosophy of RISC means that, as well as using the RISC processor to emulate an 8 bit 6502, using different software, the same computer could be turned into a MS DOS or UNIX machine.

Acorn now have to turn their development system into a product. They will have to choose a price and the right packaging for their RISC design, and they'll need to deliver software to make RISC run off-the-shelf business and scientific packages. The cost of production of a RISC processor can be around a fifth of that for a traditional processor; if Acorn could produce a RISC computer for the cost of a Master system, say £900, giving twenty times the speed for no extra cost, they would have a very competitive machine.

Dave Brown (based on Micro Live notes)

MICRO LIVE

The last Micro Live may well have literally been the last Micro Live, as the BBC have not yet decided whether the programme will return in the Autumn. If you enjoy Micro Live, and think it should continue, why not tell the BBC. The address to write to is: The Controller, BBC 2, Television Centre, Wood Lane, London W12 7RJ.

WHAT'S IN THE MAGS?

A & B COMPUTING, May 1987, Vol 4, #5, 100pp, £1.50

Features & Programs:

NOR hints & tips / Databases for education / Word processing on the Electron / LOGO graphics routines / Control loops in Pascal / AMX MAX / Watford's Apollo Modem / Hardware repairs

Reviews:

Deebugsoft's Command rom / PMS' DIALUP / WAF (Lotus 1-2-3 clone) for the 512 co-processor / Games reviews, inc Firetrack by Orlando, & Psycastria maps / DotPrint Plus / PMS Multi-Fonts NTQ / Book reviews: 'Beginning Micro PROLOG' & 'Official Guide to Oxford Pascal' / 512 (MS DOS) software, inc Volkswriter 3, Supercalc 3, VP-Planner & Logistix 2 / Modem Master

THE MICRO USER, May 1987, Vol 5, #3, 172pp, £1.25

Features & Programs:

Brackets & syntax in BASIC / Live reporting on Ceefax / Ceefax free software / Guide to May Ceefax programs / Interactive Ceefax programs / How teletext is transmitted / Sprite handling / Loops in pseudocode / Micros in rural schools / Co-ordinates and random selection / Building a video digitiser / Logic / Duck grid game / Upgrade for Stryker's Run / Program library / File management program / Telesoftware / Ludo game

Reviews:

Acorn ATS Teletext rom / Squirrel's TV Director / Clwyd's Measure and Tell / Games

ACORN USER, May 1987, #58, 190pp, £1.30

Features & Programs:

Converting BASIC into assembler / Super Art accelerator / Fractals / Robots / Compatibility of hardware add-ons / Typeface design / Index of educational software / Data transfer between Compacts & Masters / Data Protection Act

Reviews

Games, inc Repton 2 map / Books / Lego control modules / History programs

Dave Brown

COVER

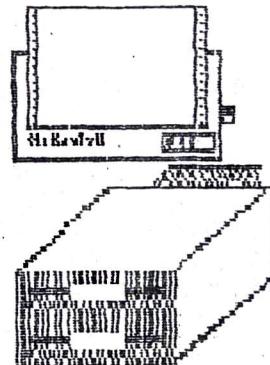
This month's cover was designed by Ian Brown. If you want to draw a cover or write an article for the Newsletter, please contact Dave Brown or Pete Frith.

FOR SALE

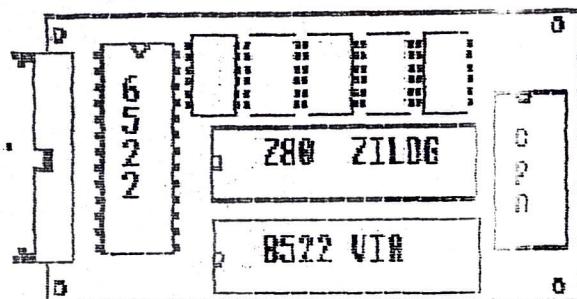
AMX MAX icon-based 'desktop' rom, only £15. Telephone Andrew on Sheffield 307265 after 6 pm.

FOR SALE.

Oki Microline 80 dot matrix printer.
40/80/132 column printer with block
teletext type graphics.
Centronics standard interface.
Friction or form feed.
£75



TRS 80 Line printer VII (DMP100)
80 column dot matrix printer.
Dot addressable graphics
£80



LVL/Leasalink 40 track dual drive.
No data or power leads.
Will separate.
£40 each or £70 for both

Torch (CPM) 288 Second Processor.
64k ram, Perfect Writer/Speller/Filer/Calc integrated software, BBC (288) Basic & Manuals.
£180 or will consider exchange for Music 5000 or Teletext Adapter
Contact Pete on 0742-459165 (After 6pm)

HELP

Does any member have a Philips CM8533 RGB Monitor? I suspect mine is not quite as it should be and would like to see if another Monitor has the same characteristics. For one thing, the yellow on mine is decidedly orange, and certain combinations of colours with vertical lines over colour backgrounds produces some strange effects. Can any member help or know of a service engineer who might be able to sort out the problems, without depriving me of my monitor for more than a few days!

Mike Robinson (The Librarian) Phone: 342870